

# Personality Characteristics of Male Basketball Athletes

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**Abstract:** *The study at hand sought to find out the personality characteristics of the sixty seven (67) male basketball athletes from Isabela State University, Echague, Isabela, Philippines as measured by the Manchester Personality Questionnaire (MPQ), as basis for the design of a proposed psychological recruitment program. Descriptive research design was utilized employing mean analysis to examine the data gathered. Findings revealed low average scores on the primary dimensions of personality: originality, rule consciousness, openness to change and social confidence which were reflected in their low scores in the big five factors: creativity, agreeableness, extroversion and resilience. Based on the result of the study, it proposes that in the recruitment of male basketball athletes, the assessment of personality characteristics should be taken into consideration as training needs identification geared towards peak sport performance.*

**Key words:** *Personality Characteristics, Manchester Personality Questionnaire, Psychological Recruitment Program.*

## 1. Introduction

Sport psychologists have long been captivated whether or not successful athletic performance can be accurately predicted on the basis of personality or psychological assessment. One feature of the field is the prediction of future performance through the possibility that athletes possess personality characteristics that make them effective and successful in their chosen sport (Lopez and Santelices, 2011). Personality has been defined as a exceptional pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that distinguish one person from another that persist over time and situations (Phares & Chaplin, 1997, cited by Aidman, 2004). Personality is expressed through its influences on the body, in conscious mental life, and through the individual's social behavior (Mayer, 2005). Hence, personality is concerned with what are generally human nature, as well as individual differences. Trait theorist had proposed several numbers of

possible traits, including Hans Eysenck's three-factor theory and Raymond Catell's 16 personality factors. However, researchers felt that Catell's theory was too complex and Eysenck's was too limited in scope (Pervin & Oliver, 2001). While there are many features of personality have been proposed, currently, the most accepted is the "Big-Five" theory proposed by Costa and McCrae (1997).

The Big-five factor theory emerged to define the basic traits that served as the building blocks of personality. Costa & McCrae (1997) illustrates the Big-Five trait factor model which includes (1)*neuroticism* defines adjustment versus emotional instability. Identifies individuals prone to psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive urges and maladaptive coping responses; (2)*extraversion* describes quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction; activity level; need for stimulation; and capacity for joy; (3)*openness* to change illustrates proactive seeking and appreciation of experience for its own sake; toleration for and exploration of the unfamiliar; (4)*agreeableness* looks into the quality of one's interpersonal orientation along a continuum from compassion to antagonism in thoughts, feelings and actions; and (5)*conscientiousness* sees the individual's degree of organization, persistence and motivation in goal-directed behavior; contrasts dependable, demanding and difficult people with those who are lazy, apathetic and sloppy.

Each of the five personality factors characterize a range between two extremes and that in reality, people lie somewhere in between the two polar ends of each personality traits. Exploring the psychological characteristics of athletes in sports psychology may help identify attitudes and personality traits which are helpful to performance. Personality traits had been widely researched since the establishment of sport psychology as an academic discipline (Deaner & Silva, 2002). The most attractive applications in sports psychology is predicting athletic performance from personality characteristics (Aidman & Schofield, 2007), in fact, a wide variety of personality traits have been found to be associated with levels of achievement in a number of sports (Davies & Mogk, 1994).

Cox (2007) stated athletes differ based on many personality characteristics. Athletes often believe they are invincible, above the law, or incapable of being hurt (McMahon, 2004). Athletes, especially in performance sports, exhibit more competitiveness (Cox, 2007) and possesses a thrill-seeking behavior. Similarly, Cubos (2009) stated that there is no distinct personality profile exists for athletes. That is, not all athletes share the same personality traits. Some sport performers tend to be competitive and self-confident while others tend to be the complete opposite and more reserved or laid back. This is likely so since personality seems to be composed of several different traits that combine to influence specific behaviors.

Knowing and understanding an athletes' inherent disposition will allow coaches to a more precise prediction of how they will respond in various sport situation. Overall, personality profile should help coaches' not only select higher probability for success players in the future, but also maximizes their ability to understand and relate to each individual athlete. Thus, knowledge of athletes' personality characteristics when made available may be useful in attaining sports excellence.

The study at hand focused on investigating what personality characteristics do male college basketball athletes have, so as to propose a psychological recruitment program which may aid as training needs identification. Basketball was created a simple game. The primary objective was to rest a ball, without dribbling, into a basket. It however has evolved into the most exciting exhibition of athletic ability where there were many rule changes, because of the increasing ability of the players. It is not only a fast-paced, physical game but a mental sport. A player must be able to communicate very well to his teammates during the game. The sport of basketball requires not only a physically fit team player but also a psychologically healthy player considering that basketball is a mind game. Hence, understanding personality characteristics of athletes could potentially be useful to coaches as they prepare a mental "game plan".

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The fundamental concern of this study is to find out the personality characteristics of male basketball athletes from Isabela State University Echague, Isabela, Philippines as a basis for a proposed psychological recruitment program. Specifically, this study sought to provide answers to the following:

1. What is the personality profile of the male basketball athletes as measured by the Manchester Personality Questionnaire (MPQ)?
2. Based on the result of the study, what psychological recruitment program can be proposed for male basketball athletes?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

The descriptive research design was used to answer the problems posted.

### 3.2. Participants of the Study

Participants of the study were the sixty seven (67) male basketball athletes from the different colleges of Isabela State University, Echague, Isabela Philippines who were enrolled during the first semester of academic year 2014-2015. The participants of the study were determined through purposive sampling since other athletes were not around during the conduct of the study.

### 3.3. Data Measure

The Manchester Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) factor version 14 is a 90-item standardized questionnaire which provides a profile on 14 primary dimensions as well as a "big 5" dimensions summary profile. Items are short statements which require a response to describe the way the respondents tends to think, feel and act; responses will be placed in terms of a rating scale of never; occasionally; fairly often; generally and always. Scales include: *Originality, Rule Consciousness, Openness to Change, Assertiveness, Social Confidence, Empathy, Communicativeness, Independence, Rationality, Competitiveness, Conscientiousness, Perfectionism, Decisiveness, and Apprehension*. Big-Five scales include: *Creativity, Agreeableness, Achievement, Extroversion and Resilience*.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Scoring of the tests administered was based on the standards set by the inventory's manual, after which, descriptive statistics (mean analysis) was utilized to describe the profile of the participants' personality traits, while interpretation of its ranges was based on the norms stated in the manual. Interpretation and analysis of data covers the prominent low scores of the participants as basis for proposing a psychological recruitment program.

**4. Results and Discussion**

**Table 1. Primary Dimensions Personality Characteristics of Male Basketball Athletes**

| Personality Characteristics | Mean from Raw Scores         | Equivalent Sten Scale |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Primary Dimensions:         |                              |                       |
| 1. Originality              | 1.86<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |
| 2. Rule Consciousness       | 1.93<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |
| 3. Openness to Change       | 1.93<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |
| 4. Assertiveness            | 2.14<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 5. Social Confidence        | 1.86<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |
| 6. Empathy                  | 2.21<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 7. Communicativeness        | 2.00<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 8. Independence             | 2.14<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 9. Rationality              | 2.36<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 10. Competitiveness         | 2.33<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 11. Conscientiousness       | 2.79<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 12. Perfectionism           | 2.36<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 13. Decisiveness            | 2.07<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 14. Apprehension            | 2.07<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |

Note: Computed Means were determined from the raw scores after scoring the MPQ answer sheet. Sten Scales are coded for use in the SPSS. Low average is coded as 1; Average is coded as 2 and High Average is coded as 3.

As shown from table 1, male basketball athletes have low average scores on personality primary dimensions such as originality, rule consciousness, openness to change and social confidence with mean values ranging from 1.86-1.93.

Low scorers on the personality characteristics mentioned mean that participants find it hard to see how to make improvements, have fewer original ideas and have to work hard to make things happen. With these, they are comfortable with the system and reduce risks of failure which eventually made them to be less socially confident, are less self-assured and unsure of the impact they have on people. Basketball game requires that a team player should be a risk-taker and confident because situations during the game are unexpected. A basketball athlete needs to consider planning, innovative, imaginative, curious, experimental and conceptual. Hence, the low scores found may hinder sport success. To be an excellent athlete means having the ability to be communicative, competitive, conscientious, perfectionist, and resilient, among others (Lopez and Santelices, 2011).

**Table 2: Big Five Factors Personality Characteristics of Male Basketball Athletes**

| Big Five factors: | Mean from Raw Scores         | Equivalent Sten Scale |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Creativity     | 1.93<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |
| 2. Agreeableness  | 1.93<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |
| 3. Achievement    | 2.50<br>(Sten Scale 4-5-6-7) | Average               |
| 4. Extroversion   | 1.93<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |
| 5. Resilience     | 1.93<br>(Sten Scale 1-2-3)   | Low Average           |

Note: Computed Means were determined from the raw scores after scoring the MPQ answer sheet. Sten Scales are coded for use in the SPSS. Low average is coded as 1; Average is coded as 2 and High Average is coded as 3.

Table 2 revealed participants to have low scores on the big five factors' namely creativity, agreeableness, extraversion and resilience with mean values of 1.93.

The low score on creativity described male basketball athletes to have a conservative attitude to change. They are more conscious of and influenced by precedent, more cautious of change and are less achievement oriented. For team players especially for basketball games, strategies and tactics should vary because circumstances of each simulation of games also vary. Hence, creativity is needed. For sports activity, optimal level of stimulation or arousal is necessary (Shrivastava, Venugopal and Singh, 2011).

Participants were also noted to have low scores in agreeableness which is a dimension that measures how individuals relate to each other. The agreeable person is one who takes account of other people's views and has a measured and rational approach. Participants are more independent, self-reliant and individualistic. It would be wrong, however to assume this side of the domain is the wrong side. Self-reliance and independence are important qualities in many situations; however, with team players they should not work and think individually, rather should work and agree on one view towards one goal. Agreeableness and conscientiousness are personality traits according to Singh and Choudhary (2011) are directly related to optimum sport performance. Hence, the low score reported by the male basketball athletes has to be taken seriously by the coach and a sport psychologist.

It was also noted that participants have low scores in extraversion which imply that they are less sociable and less spontaneous which means they tend to worry when in charge and are slower to take decisions and actions. The need to improve this trait is essential since extroverts have been found to excel in sports (Eysenck, 1995 cited by Shrivastava, Venugopal and Singh, 2011). Lopez and Santelices (2011) agree that athletes have to possess high score in achievement and extraversion to become successful in their sport.

Low scores in the apprehension scale show anxious behavior and sensitivity to people's approval and worry about what others think of them. They get defensive when they are criticized. In contrast to an important attribute of a good athlete which is to be calm, relaxed and can easily bounce back from setbacks, participants of the study revealed that they tend to be worried and have a high need for approval. Anxiety can have an overwhelming effect on the performance of athletes (Janelle, 2002; Jones & Hanton, 2001). Athan & Sampson (2013) stated anxiety can be very exhausting on the athlete's energy level for sports requiring endurance and power especially in sport where coolness and extreme calmness (basketball free throw; free kick in football) is required, sport anxiety can hinder athlete's ability to stay calm and may eventually lead to the inability to stay focused on the current task. Bull (et al., 2005) stated that when an athlete cannot control these negative energies, it becomes a problem which affects his performance. An athlete will never perform at his best no matter how great his skills are if he is not able to manage his apprehensions, fears, worries, anger and frustration before every event (Athan & Sampson, 2013). Thus, benefits from having control over unproductive negative energy results in positive competition outcomes (Kuan & Roy, 2007).

## 5. Conclusion

Personality characteristics of team members in particular may influence the way in which groups perform. Various researches show that athletes who participate in team sports are more independent, more objective, less anxious, self-confident and socially outgoing (Gat & McWhirter, 2000 Nia and Besharat (2010). Conversely, the study found out that male basketball athletes from Isabela State University, Echague, Isabela, Philippines have manifested low scores on originality, rule consciousness, openness to change and social confidence which are also reflected with their low scores in the big five factors namely creativity, agreeableness, extroversion and resilience which are characteristics to be least expected for a team player. A good team player is one that can put his ego to the side to assist in accomplishing a goal that will benefit both the individual and the team. A basketball athlete needs to have a positive mental attitude, a strong work ethic, a student mentality, and a willingness to observe, listen and take direction. He should also be assertive if a situation arises where leadership needs to be demonstrated, thus, takes risk and less apprehensive.

## 6. Recommendation

Personality makes the difference between "the best" and "the rest" (Aidman, 2007). While coaches are experts in the identification of physical attributes needed for athletic success, they may lack the ability to identify psychological skills (Humara, 2000). Hence, it is recommended that a coach be working hand-in-hand with a sport psychologist in the selection of athletes.

The following psychological recruitment program is proposed:

A). The recruitment program for male basketball athletes to include a personality assessment in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses in relation to their personality characteristics. This will help predict future behavior as to how an athlete will behave under certain circumstances. Talent and skill, however, go together and remain the best measure in choosing an athlete, however between two players of the same skill level, it is recommended to recruit one who possesses the more desirable personality factor.

B). The personality assessment may serve as a TNI (training needs identification) for athletes who may be found having low scores on certain personality factors that need to be addressed such as excessive anxiety, worrying, poor confidence

during competition, fear, low resiliency, overly aggressive, and other undesirable traits.

C) A Psychological Skills Training (PST) program be included as part of the recruitment program to make athletes more mentally prepared for competition and overcome their anxieties and worries, making them more mentally tough. The PST program be included in their regular physical training for the enhancement of their sports performance incorporating goal setting; self-confidence; relaxation techniques; self-talk, concentration; visualization and imagery; team cohesion and team building. These attributes of mental toughness directly or indirectly influence each other, for example: visualization and imagery improves concentration and attention, anxiety regulation and energy management (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Murphy & Martin, 2002), also boost self-confidence and the feeling of in control increases motivation (Pigozzi, 2004; Mellalieu et al., 2006) and can function as a defense or shield between thoughts, feelings and emotions (Zizzi, Deaner & Hirschhorn, 2003); proper relaxation and positive self-talk enable an athlete to better cope with competitive anxiety and a notable increase in self-confidence and motivation (Shinke & Costa, 2001).

D). The psychological recruitment program mentioned above may serve as benchmark for other field of sport to follow.

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